United Nations A/55/PV.108

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

108th plenary meeting
Friday, 13 July 2001, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 10 *(continued)*

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

Report of the Secretary-General on prevention of armed conflict (A/55/985 and Corr.1)

Mr. Niculescu (Romania) Romania aligned itself with the European Union statement on this very important and topical issue, prevention of armed conflict. I would like first to add a few comments on the cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and then some comments from a national perspective.

As far as cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE is concerned, I am encouraged by the recognition granted by the Secretary-General in his report to the role played in preventing armed conflicts not only by the Member States and the main bodies of the United Nations, but also by regional organizations like the OSCE.

Each conflict is unique, but there are, however, regional conditions which nobody can ignore. It goes without saying that only a regional perspective, in conjunction with a broader, global one, can ensure the much-needed integrated and consistent approach to any conflict prevention or peace-building activities.

We are all aware that, as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe plays a specific role in promoting peace and stability, enhancing cooperative security and advancing democracy and human rights in Europe. In our opinion, the value added by the OSCE can be seen precisely in the fields of preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in the area of its competence.

In this context, since the very beginning of its chairmanship-in-office of the OSCE Romania has valued the unique global significance of the United Nations system, particularly the role assigned to the Security Council, and counts on its continuing support and cooperation.

When my Minister for Foreign Affairs came to the United Nations as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE twice this year, he put forward several ideas aimed at improved cooperation between the United Nations and the pan-European organization. These ideas and proposals are essentially based on the firm conviction that the lessons learned from the conflicts and crises in the OSCE area have underlined the need for ever closer and more efficient cooperation among all organizations working together in Europe, as required by the General Assembly resolution on United Nations-OSCE cooperation and other pertinent documents of both organizations.

Allow me to briefly reiterate some of these proposals: enhanced coordination; a regular flow of

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information; the exchange of liaison officers; joint training of staff in the field of early warning and prevention; joint expert meetings on specific areas of early warning and prevention; the development of common indicators for early warning; and the establishment of a database on the conflict prevention capabilities of both the United Nations and the regional organizations.

I should now like briefly to offer some comments from a national perspective. Like any other country, Romania would like to see a stable environment based on the consolidation of democracy and economic prosperity. That is why Romania's Government made clear our aspirations to join the Euro-Atlantic structures, as well as our commitment to providing greater stability and security to the community to which we belong. My country is actively participating in a wide range of global, regional and subregional activities that have as their major goal both healing the wounds of past and present conflicts and preventing the emergence of new ones. Needless to say, all efforts to this end are welcome. Among them, we very much commend the endeavours undertaken by the Secretary-General, in close cooperation with the General Assembly and you, Mr. President, and with the Security Council, aimed at moving the United Nations from "a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention" (*A/55/985, p. 1*).

We very much support the premises of and the recommendations included in the Secretary-General's report that we are debating today, and we are ready to make our own contribution to their implementation. In particular, we share the vision that conflict prevention and sustainable development reinforce each other and, consequently, that a greater focus on social and economic development, good governance, democratization and respect for human rights is required. We consider that preventive action should be initiated at the earliest possible stage of an emerging conflict; one cannot repeat enough that prevention is not only better, but always cheaper, than cure. At the same time, any preventive strategy should address the deepest structural roots of conflicts, including the economic ones. It should not ignore their long historical roots, which often have a cultural, ethnic or religious dimension, because while trying to build peace for today we should avoid sowing the seeds of future conflicts or wars.

Mr. Hughes (New Zealand): First of all, I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on convening this plenary meeting of the General Assembly to consider the Secretary-General's important report. There is a great deal of wisdom in this document, and we believe it will serve as an essential frame of reference for the Organization and Member States for some years to come.

The Secretary-General has articulated a number of key principles with which we very much agree. The Charter does, indeed, provide a strong mandate for preventing armed conflict, and all the relevant parts of the Organization, including the General Assembly, as well as the Security Council, of course, should contribute to meeting this objective.

We also agree in general with the Secretary-General's guiding principle that national Governments have primary responsibility for preventing conflict, and that in most cases the international community can do little more than provide the financial, technical and human resources to assist Governments which display the will to address the root causes of conflict. It is also the case, however, that there are instances in which Governments lack the capacity to resolve conflicts themselves, in which case much greater responsibility devolves to the international community, including the United Nations, to assist in the prevention of conflict and the protection of civilians. This is particularly true in the case of conflicts within States which, as has been said many times, is increasingly the more common variant, and which, indeed, is the form of conflict of greatest concern to New Zealand's own region, the South Pacific.

The Secretary-General's report highlights the important role to be played in conflict prevention by regional organizations. In the South Pacific, political leaders have responded to increasing levels of conflict and instability by seeking new forms of collective preventive action. At the meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum in Kiribati last year, they adopted the Biketawa Declaration, which provides a framework for regional cooperation in preventive diplomacy and conflict avoidance. The Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum has been given the tasks of elaborating this framework and of developing practical mechanisms for achieving its aims, including in cooperation with the United Nations.

In the broader Asia-Pacific region, we, like Australia, which spoke yesterday, believe that the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) has a potentially invaluable role to play in conflict prevention. The ARF represents an effort to address pressing regional security issues by serving as a forum for their discussion and by building confidence among countries in the region. Members of the ARF have agreed to a three-stage process, from confidence-building to preventive diplomacy and, finally, conflict resolution. The ARF is currently in between the first and second stages of this endeavour. ARF ministers will shortly consider a paper on the definition, concepts and principles of preventive diplomacy. They will also look at mechanisms to enhance the ability of the ARF to address regional security situations through the establishment of a register of experts and eminent persons, and the enhancement of the role of the chairperson between meetings. We hope that progress can be made on these initiatives over the coming months.

The Secretary-General's analysis of the complex interrelationship between development and peace and security strikes a strong chord. While it is true that solutions to conflict lie largely within the societies and countries affected, official development assistance can play an important role, both in helping to head off conflict and in post-conflict peace-building efforts. The restoration of effective law and justice and the disarmament of combatants are areas that can be supported in this way.

In Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, for instance, official development assistance has been targeted to provide a rapid peace dividend with the aim of preventing a return to the almost habitual violence on that island that took place during the previous decade. It is pleasing to note the progress that has been made towards a comprehensive political settlement, in which the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville has played an important part.

In Solomon Islands, official development assistance is helping to fund New Zealand's contribution to the International Peace Monitoring Team led by Australia, as well as civil society efforts in support of the peace process. High unemployment and limited training opportunities for young people are major factors contributing to the conflict in Solomon Islands. We have therefore used development assistance to continue to provide education opportunities for young people who might otherwise have been tempted to become involved in the fighting.

Instability in Fiji has required a different approach, with a focus on supporting law and justice, poverty alleviation, human rights and humanitarian objectives. All of these projects are important. As the Secretary-General has observed in his report, prevention is infinitely preferable to cure. We therefore support his call for peace and security considerations to be effectively integrated into bilateral and multilateral development programmes.

There are, of course, many other factors which fuel conflict. We welcome the emphasis the Secretary-General has placed on transparency in armaments, and the useful role played by the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. In the South Pacific, we have been made conscious of the potentially destabilizing influence of the unchecked proliferation of small arms. In recent years we have seen conflicts become very destructive through the leakage of small arms from Government stocks, and we have witnessed attacks on institutions of modern democracy as a result, the Parliament in Suva being just one example from last year. On the positive side, constructive regional approaches have been developed to address small arms concerns in the South Pacific, including the Pacific Forum's Honiara Initiative and Nadi Framework. We of course welcome the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, taking place here at the moment. We will be making sure that the concerns of the South Pacific are heard at the Conference, and we will be seeking a balanced and comprehensive programme of action from it.

The Secretary-General's report contains many more suggestions worthy of support. We would also in particular note its analysis of the impact of armed conflict on children. It is through the care, protection and education of children that the seeds of future conflict can most effectively be made barren. We echo the Secretary-General's call for enhanced efforts to address the needs of children affected by armed conflict, and we urge States to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. For our own part, we hope to be able to ratify this Optional Protocol in the near future.

We also support the Secretary-General's recognition of the potential role to be played by civil society in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict. Our experience in the South Pacific, including in Bougainville, Solomon Islands, Fiji and, further afield, of course, in East Timor, has shown that positive engagement by civil society groups, including international non-governmental organizations and volunteer services, community groups, and religious and women's groups, can be invaluable. We were pleased to note that part of our contribution to the Trust Fund for the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action will be used for the United Nations study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, including the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution.

Finally, I might note that later this month the Secretary-General is to make detailed recommendations to the Security Council on the future of the United Nations presence in East Timor after independence. East Timor is a good example of the need for the international community to build on a successful peacekeeping intervention by laying the political, economic, judicial and constitutional foundations for lasting peace and security. East Timor will require continued assistance from the international community, including an effective United Nations presence funded by assessed contributions, beyond independence if it is to achieve the desired end-state.

The United Nations and its Member States have made a significant investment to promote East Timor's security, reconstruction and development. It is important that this investment is not undermined by a precipitate reduction of international support for East Timor. The country's future peace and stability depend upon it.

Once again, Mr. President, we are grateful to you for having made available this opportunity to discuss the Secretary-General's report in this setting. The challenge henceforth will be to ensure solid follow-up to this debate in the future work of the General Assembly.

Mr. Mekdad (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure, Sir, to express our deepest appreciation to you for having taken the initiative to convene this meeting of the General Assembly, with a view to allowing the States Members of the United Nations to hold an exchange of views and ideas on the report of the Secretary-General concerning the prevention of armed conflict.

I should like also to express our thanks to the Secretary-General for having prepared this report. We have studied its contents with great interest.

Let me also thank Mrs. Fréchette for her preliminary remarks.

Our debate today is extremely important, because it concerns the fundamental competence of the United Nations with regard to prevention of armed conflict. This question is at the very heart of the actions and the mission of our international Organization, and, indeed, it is the very reason for the existence of the United Nations, whose Charter sets out its main objective: to safeguard humankind from the scourge of war and armed conflict.

Nevertheless, more than 50 years after the creation of the United Nations, prevention of armed conflict remains an unrealized hope. Its very broad scope requires tireless efforts undertaken on the basis of the purposes and principles of the Charter, international legitimacy, United Nations resolutions and international and humanitarian law.

The report of the Secretary-General reaffirms that the efforts deployed by the United Nations to prevent conflict must conform to the purposes and principles of the Charter, whose importance is such that they must always be respected by the United Nations in its efforts to prevent armed conflicts.

The international community is a large family comprising numerous States. In the area of prevention of armed conflict, it is important to emphasize the implementation of democracy in relations among States. This is because States may have different social systems, ideologies, values and beliefs. Thus in international relations it is important to abide scrupulously by the basic principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-aggression and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States; and equality.

The Secretary-General, towards the end of his report, asks a serious question to which we must find an answer: Why is conflict prevention still so seldom practised? Why do we so often fail when there is a clear potential for a preventive strategy to succeed?

My delegation certainly understands what the Secretary-General has said. In the twenty-first century, collective security must be based on our commitment to come to grips with tensions, inequalities, injustice, racism and acts of aggression in their initial stages, before peace and security are jeopardized.

The report of the Secretary-General which has been submitted to us includes direct references to situations to which the United Nations and the international community must devote particular attention. My delegation understands the concerns expressed with regard to certain situations in a number of countries. Nevertheless, this report did not mention — as we might have hoped — the explosive situation in the Middle East or the importance of deploying efforts to prevent armed conflict there.

There is a paragraph that refers to the Middle East, but it does not properly mention the occupied Palestinian territories or the occupied Syrian Golan, although the Secretary-General is working on an almost daily basis to try to prevent the situation in the Middle East from exploding.

We would be grateful if the Secretary-General could correct this error and ensure that the United Nations position on this issue is clear. It has now been recognized that foreign occupation is one of the most dangerous factors in the emergence of conflicts. We would have liked the report to devote greater attention to this question.

It is no exaggeration to say that the current Israeli Government in particular is working every day to exacerbate tensions, fuelling armed conflict in this key region of the world. The massacre of more than 600 Palestinians by Israeli forces surely means that the situation is truly explosive.

As a result of the activities and priorities of the Israeli Government, the bombing by Israelis of Syrian forces in Lebanon on two consecutive occasions within a short period of time certainly means that the situation is explosive and requires that efforts be made to prevent this aggression, for which there is no reason except that it is what the Israeli authorities want. They have acted with impunity in the region, using aggression, killings and genocide to protect their occupation and expansion.

My delegation believes that, in its efforts to prevent armed conflict, it is important for the United Nations to affirm the implementation of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, respect for international legitimacy and international and humanitarian law.

Paragraph 94 of the Secretary-General's report underscores the importance of respect for human rights. This comes at a time when we believe that great attention must be given to this area. We would also like to mention the practical need for more interest in the right to development, in the human rights of the Palestinian people and in the needs of more than half a million Syrians who, since 1967, have been displaced from their own homes.

Paragraphs 10, 11 and 14 of the Charter state that the United Nations plays an important role in the prevention of armed conflict. We would like to endorse recommendation 1 of the report on this subject, and we would request that all measures be taken to ensure that the General Assembly plays an effective role in preventing armed conflict.

My delegation attaches particular importance to the paragraphs on disarmament. Unfortunately, we did not find any reference in the report to types of arms that represent a threat to international peace and security other than small arms and light weapons.

Clearly, nuclear war is a form of conflict that must be prevented at any cost. Nuclear disarmament must be given the highest priority. Real global security cannot be achieved unless all States are required to eliminate nuclear weapons within a specific time period. We firmly believe that the Final Document of the General Assembly's special session devoted to disarmament in 1978 rightly stated that the main priority should be granted to nuclear disarmament and weapons of mass destruction, and, afterward, conventional weapons.

The Secretary-General's report comments extensively on the creation of mechanisms to prevent armed conflict. We believe that such mechanisms must be created in consultation with the Member States. Any mechanism that goes beyond this criterion would threaten the credibility of the United Nations and would raise doubts about the mechanism itself.

In conclusion, I would like to say that prevention of armed conflict is a serious global issue, and it is very important that the proposals and ideas included in the Secretary-General's report be required to undergo

serious examination, in-depth debate and analysis by all Member States and by various United Nations organs. It would be useful for the Organization to take advantage of the lessons and experiences that it has accumulated in the field of the prevention of armed conflict, with a view to developing an effective strategy and concrete measures to prevent that type of armed conflict and to deepen the role of the United Nations in this area.

Mr. Lancry (Israel): I would like to begin by expressing Israel's appreciation for the convening of this discussion on the prevention of armed conflict, a goal which we believe to be the most effective means of achieving the peaceful world that we all desire. To that end, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict and commend him on this cogent and insightful document.

Indeed, moving the United Nations from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention embodies the highest ideals of this Organization, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Prevention drastically reduces the economic and social costs of conflict, and, of course, most important of all, the human costs. This is the ideal upon which the Organization was founded — to protect humankind from the scourge of war — and Israel shares the belief that there is no better way to protect our children from the wars of tomorrow than by preventing conflict today.

The basic premise of the Secretary-General's report is that primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national Governments and that the main role of the United Nations should be to support the efforts already under way at the national level.

The Middle East provides a dramatic example of the fruits to be reaped by this approach. The peace treaties that Israel concluded with both Egypt and Jordan, and the wars that were avoided by the conclusion of both treaties, were the result of direct, face-to-face negotiations conducted between the parties. Through all these endeavours, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) have served as guideposts on the road to peace; they were, and remain, the bases of the terms of reference adopted by the parties at the Madrid Peace Conference. Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which Israel has implemented in full, has outlined the steps necessary for the return of peace and security to the area and has committed United Nations personnel to assist in achieving those goals.

In this very context, we deeply regret the statement made by the Syrian representative relating to Israel. We find his words especially disturbing in the light of Syria's recent behaviour in fostering and prolonging conflict in our region. Along Israel's northern border, the Hezbollah terrorist organization, which receives support and encouragement from the Government of Syria, continues to launch unprovoked attacks against Israel and Israeli soldiers and civilians. This behaviour, which is a clear breach of Security Council resolutions and accepted norms of international law, is only possible due to the assistance and to the complicity of the Syrian regime, which in fact governs Lebanon and its foreign policy.

The Syrian Government continues to support Hezbollah's activities by permitting overland arms transfers to pass through Syrian territory from Iran to Hezbollah's operatives and by allowing Hezbollah to maintain terrorist training facilities in the Syrian-controlled Beka'a Valley. It has directly enhanced the capacity and the capability of the organization to launch attacks against Israel.

In this light, the international community must seriously question the conduct of the Syrian Government, given that country's impending candidature for membership in the Security Council. As an occupier of Lebanon, a sponsor of Hezbollah terrorism, and a State that grants terrorist organizations safe harbour in its territory, Syria's policies stand in blatant contradiction to the principles of the United Nations Charter. Member States must take care to ensure that only nations that strictly adhere both in word and in deed to the provisions of the Charter ascend to membership of such an important organ of the world Organization.

I would say that, in addition to the reference to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the full implementation by Israel of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and the recent appearance of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres before the Security Council bear testimony to Israel's willingness to engage in constructive dialogue aimed at resolving conflicts in our region. At the same time, all major initiatives in the region were undertaken and agreed upon by the parties themselves in direct face-to-face negotiations. That formula, when it has been

applied in full, in good faith and without reservations, has yielded unprecedented and historic results.

This point cannot be stressed enough: all the major achievements in the quest for peace in the Middle East have resulted from direct negotiations between the parties themselves. Indeed, the Secretary-General's report, with its unequivocal statement that primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national Governments and other local actors, is in a sense expressing clear support for that approach.

In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, such efforts have been under way for nearly eight years. As in the past, Israel undertook direct negotiations with the Palestinians in the hope of ending decades of conflict and preventing future ones. Indeed, much progress was achieved during those years — and not only on the political level, but in terms of economic cooperation and social and cultural interaction as well. All of that progress was predicated on clear principles: mutual recognition, the rejection of violence, the abolition of terror, and direct bilateral face-to-face negotiations.

This past September, the Palestinians decided to break with that formula by abandoning both their commitment to non-violence and the path of dialogue. This is a greatly disturbing development that the Government of Israel is actively working to resolve by its full acceptance of the Mitchell report and of the Tenet plan for a ceasefire.

But it cannot be stressed enough that the primary actions must be taken by the parties themselves, and that the international community, in keeping with the spirit of the Secretary-General's recommendations, must use the full extent of its influence to encourage the parties to persevere in dialogue aimed at bringing an end to this conflict. Engaging in violence is incompatible with the achievement of political ends. The goal of conflict prevention would be served best by a clear message that such tactics are unacceptable. To a great extent, that is the very soul of the Oslo Agreements, which made clear that there is no room for abrasive terrorism as a strategic tool for advancing political goals.

Moreover, we concur with the Secretary-General's emphasis on a multidimensional approach that takes account of social, economic, cultural, environmental and development factors. The importance of fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development should not be underestimated. Providing for the material and social well-being of individuals in areas of strife is undeniably a powerful tool for preventing conflict. In that spirit, we have endeavoured at all times to reach out to our neighbours on more than just the political level, to establish people-to-people connections, to engage in joint economic and development projects, and to increase programmes of cultural exchanges.

Israel's aspiration, beyond the necessary political settlements and peace treaties, is full integration and acceptance at a plurality of levels, including the cultural, economic and philosophical. To that end, Israeli non-profit organizations have undertaken a broad range of programmes aimed at solidifying and expanding the array of opportunities for interaction and partnership. Our broader goals are to increase the human connection among our peoples and to foster greater understanding and cultural exchange. Those programmes represent a strategy of structural prevention as described in the report.

The last point that I would like to address with regard to the Secretary-General's report relates to the recognition that the primary lesson to be drawn from the past is that the earlier the causes of conflict are addressed, the more likely it is that the parties will be able to engage in constructive dialogue and to address the actual grievances that underlie the conflict.

In that regard, I want to appeal to our Palestinian partners to move on together towards a future of dialogue, peace and genuine coexistence. The longer this war is allowed to continue, and the more our respective wounds are permitted to fester, the more difficult it will be for us to climb out of the darkness in which we have been living for more than nine months.

There is a road map before us today, and we must, for the sake of all the people of the region, take that first step together. Let us emerge once again in a renewed atmosphere and space of confidence, respect and belief in our common destiny.

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia wishes to express its profound appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening these meetings to consider an issue of importance to all Member States. We remain hopeful that our deliberations will facilitate the crystallization of ideas and approaches and will contribute substantively to the success of our endeavours.

The deliberations at the Millennium Summit, held last September, once again highlighted the need to accord priority to conflict prevention in the twenty-first century. The eruption of numerous deadly conflicts during the past decade had a disastrous impact on the political, economic and social well-being of humanity and tore at the very fabric of amity and harmony among nations. Those conflicts not only engendered massive humanitarian relief efforts and interventions, but also gave rise to the high costs of peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building. In consequence, it has become increasingly self-evident that reactive strategies will no longer suffice, and that it is time to mount a coherent strategy that will make conflict prevention an integral part of the Organization's concerted efforts to maintain international peace and security.

It is for those weighty reasons that my delegation welcomes the comprehensive and thoughtful report of the Secretary-General (A/55/985) on the prevention of armed conflict. The report upholds the core mandate of the United Nations and its mission to forestall the emergence of conflict; it reviews the relevant mechanisms and institutions; and it formulates a strategy for protecting humanity from the scourge of war, armed conflict and indiscriminate violence.

We agree in particular with regard to the key role of the Organization in strengthening national capacities and the need for the consent and support of the Governments concerned with regard to efforts towards conflict prevention.

We share the Secretary-General's view that the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national Governments. In order to contribute to effective preventive action, Governments need sustained political will. It is worth noting that not all Governments are fully equipped with sufficient capacity for such activities, particularly when situations are volatile. With a view to strengthening that capacity, international cooperation based on constructive and mutually complementary partnerships should be encouraged. This should conform not only to the 10 principles of conflict prevention enunciated in the report of the Secretary-General, but also to the requirements of impartiality and non-selectivity.

The report is also rightly addressed to the General Assembly, which has the competence, in concert with other agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations, to eliminate the root causes of conflicts, especially those relating to socio-economic development. Thus, the vital role of all parts of the United Nations system in reducing and eradicating the underlying causes of conflicts has to be acknowledged. The General Assembly, as a universal forum, has an important role to play in the maintenance of international peace and security. Hence, the potential of implementing the relevant provisions of the Charter relating to conflict prevention must be recognized.

We agree with the linkage the report establishes between conflict prevention and sustainable development, which will require a multidimensional approach encompassing both short-term and long-term measures. Economic and Social Council projections of socio-economic problems that might trigger the breakdown of a political system and an attendant crisis, and strategies formulated to deal with those potentially explosive situations, would contribute significantly to addressing the root causes of conflicts and the role of development in long-term conflict prevention. For this compelling reason, it is imperative to substantially increase the flow of development assistance to developing countries. In addition, we consider it of crucial importance that the United Nations system and the international community further promote the potential role of economic and development cooperation among developing countries within the context of conflict prevention.

Appropriately, the crucial role of regional organizations in preventive strategies is recognized in the report, as conflicts are inseparable from their regional contexts. For geographical, historical and other reasons, regional organizations are uniquely placed to propose solutions and to forestall the emergence of hostilities. Such regional and subregional strategies are particularly relevant in focusing attention on potential threats emanating from cross-border issues, such as illicit trade in small arms, refugees, mercenaries and irregular forces.

At the same time, the modalities of cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations need to be improved in the areas of preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peace-building.

Hence, a thorough exploration of possible mechanisms and procedures to further strengthen interaction between these organizations in the political,

security, economic, social and other fields has now become of pre-eminent importance. In this context, Indonesia extends its support to the follow-up processes of the regular meetings between organizations, as recommended by the Secretary-General.

My delegation has taken note of the modalities, as noted in recommendation 9 of the report, by which the traditional preventive role of the Secretary-General is to be enhanced. We welcome the Secretary-General's intention to establish an informal network of eminent persons for conflict prevention. This network should be transparent and its terms of reference should be clearly defined.

We commend the report's recognition of the role of civil society, non-governmental organizations and private enterprises in conflict prevention.

We would like to conclude by reiterating that this is an issue of importance to all Member States, and we anticipate the resumption of our deliberations in the foreseeable future. At this stage, our comments are preliminary and general in nature, and, like other Member States, we will give the report's recommendations in-depth consideration with a view to further reflection and reassessment. Meanwhile, we should place conflict prevention affecting regional peace and international security at the top of our agenda, while improving and strengthening the capacity of the United Nations in this field.

Mr. Satoh (Japan): I would like to join previous speakers in expressing my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate on the Secretary-General's report on the prevention of armed conflict. Conflict prevention is indeed a topic of great importance to all Members of the United Nations.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for issuing the first comprehensive report which could serve as a basis for exploring concrete actions for conflict prevention. I therefore support your initiative, Mr. President, to adopt a procedural resolution to forward the report to all relevant organs within the United Nations system and other concerned actors for their consideration.

Today, I would like to offer our thoughts on conflict prevention, with particular attention to the roles of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General. Our comments on the role of the Security Council were presented in the Security Council last month.

Japan has long advocated that the international community should address the question of conflict by taking a comprehensive approach that would combine political, economic, social and humanitarian measures, taking into account the specific requirements at the time. Such an approach should be applied to every stage of conflict prevention, possibly from pre-conflict preventive efforts to post-conflict peace-building activities. Needless to say, ensuring cooperation and coordination among various actors is essential to the success of such a comprehensive approach.

In this context, the General Assembly could make significant contributions to the cause of conflict prevention. While the Security Council is suited to taking quick actions in responding to conflicts, the General Assembly could consider long-term conflict prevention strategies, particularly in the areas of the pre-conflict maintenance of peace and stability and the post-conflict prevention of the recurrence of conflict, which require political, economic and social measures.

The General Assembly could also play an important role by mainstreaming on the international community's agenda certain issues that are critically important for conflict prevention. The current Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons is a case in point, as was the special session on HIV/AIDS.

I would also like to emphasize the importance of enhancing the preventive capabilities of the respective organs of the United Nations system. In this regard, the Secretary-General has an important role to play. We support the ideas contained in the report for strengthening the Secretary-General's traditional roles in this area. These include the increased use of United Nations interdisciplinary fact-finding and confidence-building missions in volatile areas, the development, together with relevant regional organizations, of regional preventive strategies and the establishment of an informal network of eminent persons for conflict prevention. In this context, we welcome the efforts made by the Secretary-General to improve his roster of special representatives and special envoys.

Ad hoc Groups of Friends of the Secretary-General could also be useful in strengthening his conflict prevention activities. It is of course crucial to include in such groups those countries with the

capacity to contribute to the conflict prevention efforts, as well as the representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions and other development-oriented organizations.

The recommendations set forth in the report should be followed up in a constructive and consistent manner. I would therefore like to assure the Assembly that Japan is prepared is participate in the deliberations on the report in this spirit.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today's discussion in the General Assembly is devoted to one of the most pressing questions on the agenda of the international community. The prevention of armed conflict has become firmly embedded in the minds of the Member States of the United Nations as part and parcel of the multifaceted efforts to maintain international peace and stability.

Many years had to elapse and great human and material resources had to be expended for the world to realize something that should have been an obvious truth; that the early identification of trends leading to crises and the timely forestalling of their development into armed clashes are much more effective in every respect than extinguishing conflicts in their heated phase.

Carrying out such an approach in practice calls for great effort and resources. This, however, is a fail-safe investment in regional and global security, which pays for itself over and over again by making it possible to prevent suffering and death for tens or even hundreds of thousands of entirely innocent people.

However, even the largest amount of resources will be insufficient unless the culture of prevention becomes rooted in the minds of the international community. Its essence lies in the absolute priority to be given to collective preventive action and in the joint elaboration of a comprehensive strategy of preventing armed conflict under the auspices of the United Nations, given its central role.

It is no accident that the strengthening of the culture of conflict prevention became one of the all-permeating topics at the Millennium Summit. The President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, and the leaders of many other States devoted a considerable part of their statements at the United Nations millennial forum to this topic, paying particular attention to the need for the effective removal of the deep-seated causes of conflict, including the social and economic ones. The decisions of the Millennium Summit and Millennium Assembly were targeted at activating international efforts in the field of prevention. The most important thing is to follow through on these decisions appropriately and effectively.

Important guidelines for further work in that direction are contained in the Secretary-General's report on the prevention of armed conflict. One cannot but agree with the Secretary-General that the main responsibility for the establishment of a culture of prevention and for ensuring that the corresponding practical steps yield results is borne by the States themselves. The international community is called upon to extend to them, in this respect, effective cooperation under the central coordinating role of the United Nations.

The important principle of the need for support and approval of international and regional preventive action by the States affected was confirmed by the Secretary-General.

Any efforts to prevent crises and conflicts must be built on a firm base of international law, in strict compliance with the United Nations Charter, including abidance by the fundamental principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. The dramatic experience of crisis settlement in recent years, in particular in the Balkans, the Middle East and Africa, convincingly shows the harmfulness of attempts to prevent the emergence and growth of conflicts by unlawful methods of unilateral coercive force. The effect of such attempts, however well the intentions may be presented on the outside, are diametrically opposed to the stated objectives.

A comprehensive approach to preventive diplomacy increases the pressing need for improving coordination both within the United Nations system and also between the United Nations and other international structures.

Russia supports the Secretary-General's recommendations on enhancing the role and importance of prevention in the work of the General Assembly and on developing interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council in conflict prevention, while retaining the main responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In their preventive activity the two main organs of the United Nations must involve to the maximum extent possible the resources of the entire United Nations system. As for the utilization by the Security Council and the General Assembly of information and analyses prepared by other United Nations organs, such as on human rights, such material must be transmitted to the Security Council and the General Assembly on the basis of decisions by such organs and in accordance with their mandates.

We view positively the readiness of the Secretary-General to submit to the Security Council periodic regional or subregional reports on potential threats to peace and security. We believe that such reports must, as a rule, be initiated by the Security Council itself and be prepared taking into account the views of the States of the regions concerned. It is worth considering the experience of the futile attempts to introduce into the agenda of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe the question of crisis prevention in Central Asia without the agreement on this question of the Central Asian countries.

In the context of strengthening the international-law bases of preventive diplomacy, enhancing the role of the International Court of Justice deserves support, including the use of its advisory opinions for a more active application of the mechanism of peaceful settlement of disputes.

We welcome the concrete ideas on expanding cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in the field of conflict prevention. We support the Secretary-General's proposal that the high-level segment of one of the future substantive sessions of the Economic and Social Council be devoted to consideration of the question of the deep-seated causes of conflicts and the role of sustainable development in their prevention. We believe that the proposal for a more energetic involvement of the Economic and Social Council in the regional initiatives of the Security Council to prevent armed conflict is promising.

The increasing economic dimension of preventive diplomacy makes it expedient to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions and other leading international financial and economic structures.

The private sector is called upon to play a significant role in supporting United Nations efforts in the prevention of conflict. It is important to encourage socially responsible activities on the part of transnational corporations and international business as a whole in crisis zones, as this could create additional favourable conditions for the peacemaking efforts of the international community.

The multifaceted nature of the question of conflict prevention and the increasing frequency with which crises spill over national borders make it necessary for us to take a regional approach to prevention. It is important to seek to broaden cooperation between the United Nations and the regional and subregional machinery, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter. Such cooperation must be based on a rational division of labour and the complementarity of efforts and resources.

A regional approach would be particularly timely in such potentially explosive regions as the Balkans, where there are many underlying tensions. If we are to effectively remove destabilizing factors from that region we must establish a broad infrastructure for political and economic cooperation that would make it possible to reduce the potential for crisis and defuse tensions by peaceful means. These are the precise considerations that led to Russia's initiative to convene a Balkan summit, with a view to the conclusion, by the States of the region and interested neighbouring countries, of a legally binding agreement that would set out mutual obligations for absolute compliance with the fundamental principles of State relations, the most important of which are the inviolability of borders, sovereign equality, respect for territorial integrity, non-interference in the domestic affairs of other States and the non-use of force. The interest that has been shown in our initiative is a hopeful sign and demonstrates the promising nature of a regional approach to the prevention of crises and conflicts.

One important area of international activity for conflict prevention, to which insufficient attention has been paid to date, is preventing the escalation or geographical expansion of conflicts. One effective way to resolve that problem would be to effectively cut off the outside support that fans the flames of conflict in all its manifestations. I am referring to the need to elaborate, under United Nations auspices, a comprehensive strategy in this field that would encompass a whole range of problems, including some that are already being addressed by the international community, such as the problems of conflict diamonds,

the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, combating the drug trade and the training of mercenaries and the financing of illegal armed groups. We are counting on broad cooperation, in the framework of the United Nations, for the implementation of this Russian initiative.

We hope that the discussion of the Secretary-General's recommendations in the Security Council and the General Assembly and their subsequent implementation, with the support of the States Members of the United Nations, will contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the international community's efforts to remove the threat of armed conflict. Russia is fully cognizant of its responsibility for safeguarding peace and security in the world and will continue to play an active role in the attainment of this objective, working together with all interested States.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): I should like to thank you very much, Mr. President, for your leadership in convening this debate on the prevention of armed conflict, such an urgent and important topic for us all. It is the conviction of my delegation that the General Assembly is the most appropriate United Nations body to deliberate on so broad and complex a subject in all its aspects. I would also like to place on record our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive, optimistic and thoughtful report.

Throughout history, armed conflict has remained a notorious source of the worst of man-made societal disasters. The costs have always been enormous, not only in terms of halted development, disrupted health care and other social systems, alarming numbers of deaths and other casualties, the loss of property and the sense of insecurity, but also in terms of what it requires to bring durable peace and normalcy to conflict-torn societies. Ironically, however, the world has invested very little energy and very few resources in preventing such armed conflicts in pursuit of the wider goals of international peace and security. That trend needs to be urgently reversed. The time-tested adage, handed down to us from our ancestors for generations, that prevention is better than cure, must rekindle our hope. The Secretary-General's empirical assertion that the prevention of armed conflicts can be comparatively economical must trigger a fresh beginning.

We believe that, as the Secretary-General rightly recommends, conflict prevention should be made the cornerstone of collective security under the United Nations in the twenty-first century, based on the full understanding of the concepts of sustainable peace and security and sustainable development, and on the complex interlinkages between these concepts and their building blocks. The Secretary-General has made numerous other far-reaching recommendations in his report. My delegation had an opportunity to participate in the Security Council open debate on this same topic last month. Today I would like to reiterate some of our thoughts and offer some further observations, whose consideration will, we believe, be crucial when determining our collective path ahead.

First, the Charter of the United Nations seeks to maintain international peace and security and to promote socio-economic development and the rule of law, as well as human rights and justice. The maintenance of international peace and security is at the heart of the primary responsibility and obligation of the United Nations. Therefore, while the Organization needs to ensure that all appropriate measures are taken to prevent any potential armed conflict around the world, it must do so with full respect for the principles of political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States.

Secondly, the extremely complex nature and great magnitude of the work required to prevent potential conflicts demand comprehensive analysis and a holistic approach. Isolated ad hoc efforts designed in an environment lacking mutual trust and confidence will not deliver what we want. Similarly, any effort that falls short of involving all actors, at all levels and in all spheres, will be incomplete, if not counterproductive. In spite of being charged with the immediate responsibility of preventing armed conflicts, therefore, the Security Council alone will not be able to do it all, especially when it comes to taking long-term preventive measures.

There should be absolutely no effort to undermine or subordinate any organ's potential contribution and involvement in the process. The entire United Nations system, especially the principal organs, and its international partners must act in tandem. As front-line actors, the Security Council and the Secretary-General must ensure that all the principal organs of the United Nations are fully and visibly taken on board. Long-term preventive efforts also need the full cooperation of many other partners outside the United Nations

system, notably the Bretton Woods institutions, if such measures are to succeed.

The Secretary-General's efforts to examine the potential role of each principal organ, as well as of other organizations and partners, so as to forge coordinated policies and strategies, are noble and deserve appreciation. This takes us back to the fundamental tenet according to which the Organization should work as a unified whole on complex issues such as the prevention of armed conflicts. In addition to interdepartmental coordination and inter-agency coherence, interaction with relevant regional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, would be useful for adding synergy and complementarity to the work of the United Nations system. All programmes dealing with issues from the media to women and children, and from drug abuse, diseases and crimes to human rights, food security and disarmament, must be implemented in harmony. Obviously, the involvement of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies is necessary, and a mechanism to institutionalize such involvement should be in order.

Thirdly, the United Nations must enhance its ability to strengthen the capacity of national Governments to prevent conflict by updating and ensuring a better coordination of existing capabilities, and by reorienting them and adding some new ones if necessary. For example, the role of peacekeepers in preventing a recurrence of conflicts might include, in addition to their primary responsibility to restore normalcy and keep the peace, managing peace up to a certain level of sustainability, at which point the national government concerned can take on the task. Programmes may have to be implemented in packages of security and development components, so that conflicts could be defused and disarmed combatants rather smoothly integrated into mainstream social processes.

The United Nations system generates voluminous quantities of extremely useful information. An appropriate analysis of the vast body of relevant information already existing in the Organization would prove useful. The number and scope of expert fact-finding missions may have to be increased, and flexibility in the dispatch of such missions would be useful.

With the interlinkages between poverty and conflict firmly established, there can be no better way, in the longer term, to help national Governments enhance their conflict-prevention capacity than by enabling them to eradicate poverty and promote equitable socio-economic development. Investment in poverty eradication and other socio-economic development programmes need to be recognized as long-term investments for prevention of conflict, and new and additional resources need to be made available for that purpose.

Also, the role of small arms and light weapons in the promotion, triggering and escalation of conflicts is well established, and the insurmountable socio-economic damage they cause to civilians, the majority of them women and children, is fully recognized. Efforts to agree on a set of control measures and mechanisms to trace the flow of small arms through illicit trade are currently under way.

Negotiations in an environment of mutual trust and respect are needed to prevent the merciless and senseless killings and casualties overburdening medical facilities, which deter potential investors, criminalize innocent children, destabilize law and order and hinder development. The outcome of the ongoing United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects will have a strong bearing on the success of international efforts to prevent potential conflicts.

The increased use of preventive deployments in places where the eruption of potentially dangerous conflicts is likely should remain as an important tool of the United Nations to deal with this problem. We believe that increasing the use of the Secretary-General's good offices to prevent any potential conflict early on continues to be useful and effective. Strengthening and increasing the involvement of regional institutions would facilitate the devising of strategies by the United Nations, giving it intimate knowledge about, and an analysis of, the specific situation. Close cooperation with troop-contributing countries throughout the process would be extremely useful.

Moreover, Nepal concurs with the view that the sooner preventive measures are taken, the better their chances of being effective. We also fully support the concept of the culture of prevention that the Secretary-

General envisages and the membership strives to achieve.

The concept of prevention of armed conflict, like many other concepts, can in no way be generalized into a one-size-fits-all model. Instead, we believe, preventive measures need to be tailor-made. However, a scheme may be desirable to determine the level of conflict-proneness and to facilitate the choosing of measures to be undertaken. Some kind of a United Nations-devised composite "peace and development index" could be helpful.

Preventive measures would then be best employed on four different levels. These levels are peace-time prevention, such as investments in development, poverty eradication and education in tolerance; efforts during the conflict-in-the-making stage, such as fact-finding measures and preventive disarmament; efforts when the conflict is nearing an explosive stage, such as the good offices of the Secretary-General and preventive deployments; and efforts during or after a conflict — that is, peacekeeping, special training for peacekeepers to enable them to prevent conflicts from escalating, proliferating or recurring, and post-conflict peace-building measures.

In any case, the success of any conflict-prevention measure will be fully contingent on sustained political will and the long-term commitment of requisite resources from all stakeholders. This is where we face the test of our true conviction to create a peaceful world through prevention. We know that we cannot afford to fail this acid test. My delegation sincerely hopes that, with our belief in collective strength, with all stakeholders committed to rendering our planet ever safer, and with the General Assembly providing coordinating leadership at the macro level, we can survive the test.

Mr. Alcalay (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by thanking you for convening a meeting of this main organ of the United Nations to discuss a report of vital importance in the context of international relations. Indeed, we have heard interesting viewpoints during these two days of discussions on the prevention of armed conflict.

I should like also to thank the Secretary-General for submitting the report before us today. It contains an extensive and rich analysis of the problem of armed conflicts and related matters, as well as a series of recommendations that will surely contribute to the establishment of new and practical criteria to guide the work of the United Nations in the area of prevention of armed conflicts.

In the context of the major and rapid changes that have been taking place on the international scene in recent years, prevention of conflicts is becoming increasingly important and is taking on much broader dimensions. The diverse events that have taken place in various regions of the world would suggest that today, conflict prevention is the best strategy to achieve the objectives of the maintenance and strengthening of peace and security, both between countries and within individual countries.

For this reason, the delegation of Venezuela enthusiastically welcomes the holding of this debate, which is the first structured debate to be held in a pluralistic and democratic organ such as the General Assembly, and in which the voices of all Member States can be heard on a subject that is of concern to all of us.

The emergence of many armed conflicts, both new and latent, and the re-emergence of some that had been thought to be resolved, are to a great extent fuelled, among other factors, by a growing inequality between nations and by extreme poverty, which is spreading unchecked in almost all regions of the world. This is creating a disadvantageous and vulnerable situation for a great many people, whose living conditions in most cases are not compatible with the scientific and technological progress that has been achieved or with the developments we have seen in the modern world in various sectors.

These harmful conflicts are breaking out and are becoming genuine threats to peace precisely at a time when what is required, more than ever, is coordinated and effective action by the international community, with all the necessary resources to address the very serious social and economic problems facing us. These problems include extreme poverty and the widespread deterioration of health, where the main problem is the HIV/AIDS virus, whose impact — as we saw during the recent special session — is now taking on apocalyptic proportions. This is but one of the many problems that require immediate and priority attention.

That is why my delegation believes that it is necessary to develop consensus-based strategies aimed at achieving peace on the basis of the justice and

fairness to which people worldwide aspire. In this era of change and profound transformation, peace as an indivisible concept must be envisaged broadly so that States, large and small, can realize the commitment they have made to foster the creation of economic and social conditions that would make it possible to eradicate the main causes of these conflicts and thus create an environment of shared solidarity.

In his report, the Secretary-General quite rightly points out that this strategy is not the responsibility of a single entity, or even a few of them. My country shares this opinion. All of us must make this commitment; this is a task that is incumbent not only upon the bodies of the United Nations, including its various specialized agencies, funds, programmes and the Bretton Woods institutions, but also upon many outside the United Nations, such as non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Bearing this reality in mind, Venezuela concurs with the Secretary-General's approach to fostering a culture of peace and of prevention. We believe that this is necessary in order to take a proactive stance and to minimize, as far as possible, reactive approaches to the problems that beset us. The culture of prevention must be supported by and developed on the basis of effective, full implementation of the norms of international law. Similarly, adequate conditions must be created for the economic and social development of peoples. The fight against poverty and social exclusion must be paramount objectives in that development in this era of globalization and interdependence; of course, this does not have to do only with economic factors or circumstances. The creation of such conditions must become one of the guiding principles of this new culture.

In accordance with these criteria, Venezuela would like to express its support for the processes of transformation that seek to ensure the dignity of human beings and to afford them opportunities to participate fully in social, economic and political development in order to satisfy their most basic needs, while at the same time guaranteeing respect for human rights. We believe that any strategy to achieve these global objectives must include the provision of financial resources, under conditions that will not compromise the development capacities of countries receiving assistance that have already made efforts in this direction. This constitutes a key element to avoid the explosion of social tensions in countries labouring under the burden of poverty and other grave socio-economic problems.

On the basis of these elements, in conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and guided by the principles enshrined in the Venezuelan national Constitution, our country has participated and will continue to participate actively in collective efforts to encourage dialogue and understanding, both internationally and regionally, on these most pressing problems.

Finally, we once again welcome the intensive debate on the ideas put forward in the report of the Secretary-General. This is the beginning of an analysis that is vital to the future development of the peoples of the world. This debate must be pursued in order to achieve the objectives that have been set out. My country, through this preliminary approach, which we hope will be further elaborated in the future, reaffirms its commitment to designing a coherent global strategy to prevent armed conflict and to pursue the quest for a system of peace, justice and development.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, it is always a pleasure for my delegation to see you chairing plenary meetings of the Assembly. We appreciate your calling this meeting on this important subject.

Only a few years back, the General Assembly, acting on the Secretary General's report entitled "An Agenda for Peace" and the "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace", took a number of decisions to address issues relating to the maintenance of international peace, including conflict prevention. The fresh report by the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict covers a number of activities, although some of them go beyond the subject. Fresh ideas and new thinking have to be seen in the context of evidence on whether the existing legislative mandate was proving short and armed conflicts were on the increase. The reality, hearteningly, may have a silver lining. A recent study by the Center for International Development and Conflict Management at the University of Maryland, based on a study of 160 countries, has concluded that armed conflicts decreased in number and intensity by about half in the 1990s, the number of democratic Governments has vastly increased and the number of power-sharing agreements to end ethnic fighting has also increased. In considering the subject, we would remain conscious of the old dictum cautioning against

trying to fix what may not be broken; we should concentrate only on where value can be added.

As it is your intention, Mr. President, that the report should be examined by the various organs and agencies of the United Nations with respect to issues falling under their competence, we shall make only some broad comments at this stage. Some recommendations in the report merit serious consideration when considered individually; some others could have benefited from a more analytical approach, based on hard facts and empirical studies. In many cases, what has been recommended has already been agreed and is being implemented. Some examples of this are as follows: in recommendation 12, the Secretary-General encourages Member States and the Security Council to make more active use of preventive deployments before the onset of conflict, as appropriate. This issue was dealt with in detail in "An Agenda for Peace" and in General Assembly resolution 47/120 B of 20 September 1993, in which the Assembly set out the guiding principles for preventive deployment: a case-by-case approach, and the consent of — and, in principle, at the request of — the Member State or Member States involved, taking into account the positions of other States concerned. The report, apart from listing the three cases where such deployment was done, would have gained from an examination of cases where such a request has been made and how it was dealt with.

In recommendation 13, the Security Council is urged to support peace-building components within peacekeeping operations, as relevant, and to strengthen Secretariat capacity in this regard, inter alia, through the measures outlined in the report to the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. Peace-building activities are within the purview of the General Assembly, which has already set the guiding principles in its resolution 47/120 B of 1993. The Council has also addressed itself fully to this issue through a 24-paragraph presidential statement as recently as 20 February of this year. If there are concrete cases where the Council or the broader membership should have done more or must do more, specific instances need to be provided. If not, the recommendation appears superfluous. Moreover, it is also not clear how the Security Council can strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat in this regard, as the issue is being considered by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, which reports to the General Assembly.

In recommendation 15, the Security Council is encouraged to include, as appropriate, a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration component in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building operations. Through a presidential statement specifically on this issue, the Council has already endorsed this.

In recommendation 20, the Council is called upon to invite the Office of the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator to brief its members regularly on situations where there is a substantial risk of a humanitarian emergency. The Council is urged also to call for and support the implementation of preventive protection and assistance activities by United Nations agencies in situations where there is a risk of a humanitarian crisis. The Emergency Relief Coordinator deals with varied disasters. Some, such as natural disasters like earthquakes, famines and hurricanes, do not have implications for peace and security. Little purpose would be served by the Council having a briefing on such situations. Relief agencies have their hands full. They should not be distracted unnecessarily.

The second category of disasters are the ones caused by conflict. Any action by the Council would only be to avoid escalation; it would not be preventive. Besides, humanitarian personnel dabbling in conflict prevention activities, which are political by definition, risks branding them as partisan. That might expose them to avoidable risks and jeopardize their mandates. We would urge extreme caution.

In recommendation 24, the Council is encouraged, in accordance with its resolution 1325 (2000), to give greater attention to gender perspectives in its conflict prevention and peace-building efforts. By resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, the Council expressed its intention to do so and, inter alia, urged the Secretary-General to appoint more women as his special representatives and special envoys of the Secretary-General, and to take other actions on gender-related issues. The report does not give details of any concrete action taken by the Secretariat, except to note that a task force has been established, which is in the process of developing an action plan to implement the resolution. That is the status of the Council's resolution eight months after adoption.

We believe that the real need is to set out long-term measures which, if implemented seriously and fully, will contribute over time to reducing the chances of armed conflict. Here are some suggestions for a framework of long-term measures.

The first is to strengthen and spread democratic governance. Differences within societies on issues or policies are not only normal but a healthy sign of pluralism. The best way to manage those differences and to protect and promote human rights is through democratic governance, which encompasses free and fair elections, freedom of expression, the rule of law and the safeguard of basic liberties and freedoms. Sustained efforts by the international community and the United Nations towards promoting the democratic norm should be accorded high priority. This measure would promote healthy and cooperative intra-State relations. Subversion of democracy — either one's own or that of others — should be unacceptable.

The next is to remove economic impoverishment. Endemic poverty and the lack of economic development are widely acknowledged to be important causes fuelling conflict. Left unattended, economic hardship, the absence of gainful employment, the stress of daily survival, the psychology of despair and deracination erode traditional and cultural bonds that bind people and fertilize the ground for conflict. The magnitude of the economic hardship faced by the world's people, as stated by the Secretary-General in his millennium report, "We the peoples" (A/54/2000), is truly staggering. Nearly half the world's population — around 3 billion people — earn less than two dollars a day, and more than 1.2 billion earn less than one dollar a day. That is not the setting for social and political stability and harmony. There are diverse causes of conflict, but a full-scale, relentless international war against poverty and economic impoverishment will be a war against conflict. That imperative generally does not receive the required emphasis, and this report is no exception in that regard.

Another measure is to respect the principles of inter-State relations. Non-interference in the internal affairs of other States is an important principle of inter-State relations as well as of the United Nations Charter. It should be scrupulously respected. Nation-building is a task of reconciling variety within society to yield a harmonious and participatory polity; all external actions should promote that, not exacerbate the situation.

The next measure is seriously to address disarmament. The logic of the simple truth that armed conflict requires arms should be acted upon. The timing for stressing that truth is appropriate: we are in the midst of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects. Access by non-State actors to arms particularly fuels conflict. A major challenge in conflict prevention is to find an answer to the availability of arms and other weapons in the hands of terrorists and insurgents who operate impervious to law and outside its realm. It is imperative that States stop the supply of arms to such groups and take resolute action to prevent trafficking in arms and other weapons. The Conference presents us with a historic opportunity to do so, which we should not let slip away.

There should be a commitment to peaceful negotiations. Between States, differences should be settled through peaceful negotiations carried out in good faith. That calls for patience, perseverance and a determination to stay the course in that spirit. Coercion and violence should be unacceptable as a currency of international behaviour.

Over the years, the General Assembly and the Security Council have adopted enough resolutions on the various issues covered in this report; those are within their respective spheres and within the remit of the United Nations. What is required is to pursue those guidelines with prudence and sagacity.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Our thanks, Mr. President, go to you and to the Secretary-General. We welcome the Secretary-General's tireless efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the prevention of armed conflict and in the maintenance of international peace and security.

In our view, the prevention of armed conflict requires, inter alia, the promotion of an international climate based on respect for the principles of the Charter, the norms of international law and the resolutions of the United Nations, an end to what has come to be called a culture of impunity, the promotion of peace based on the principles of freedom, justice and the right of peoples to self-determination, especially of those peoples that continue to languish under foreign occupation. In that regard, we welcome all efforts to promote the role of the United Nations and its organs, including the Security Council, the General Assembly,

the Economic and Social Council and the International Court of Justice, along with that of the Secretary-General.

In any consideration of the prevention of armed conflict, it is only to be expected that there will be a focus on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, especially in the light of the present state of affairs in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and in the region in general. The strange thing here is that the report of the Secretary-General does not include any serious reference to that matter. Paragraph 77 of the report refers to "the Occupied Territories" without any further detail or serious examination of the issue, as if this parcel of territory belonged to the moon and not to the Middle East and Palestine. More than one delegation referred to this point when the report was taken up in the Security Council. As a result, the Secretariat tried to address the matter by issuing a correction. Unfortunately, the correction made matters even worse, as if there were some offices in the Secretariat claiming to have a right to define political positions contrary to the resolutions adopted by the international community.

Recently, we have noted that the reports of the Secretary-General and the documents of the Secretariat on issues relating to armed conflict, including previous reports on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, avoid, for completely unexplained reasons, addressing the issue of foreign occupation as one manifestation of armed conflict. They also avoid any specific reference to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, as well as of other Arab territories occupied since 1967. This trend in drafting reports, whether by commission or omission, reflects a serious disregard for international law, international humanitarian law, the permanent responsibility of the United Nations system towards the question of Palestine and the positions and decisions of Member States. It is inadmissible to disregard the question of foreign occupation and what it represents in terms of endangering international peace and security, and to disregard the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East in any report issued in this regard by the United Nations Secretariat.

The earlier intervention by the representative of Israel contained many distortions and misleading remarks. We are not going to deal with this issue now because we are not discussing now the essence of the question of Palestine or the situation in the Middle East. I would only like to state that Israel is the only Member State of the United Nations that is officially considered by the United Nations organs, including the Security Council and General Assembly, to be an occupying Power. Israel is the only Member State that practises settlement occupation in the twenty-first century. It is the only Member State that has continually violated the Geneva Convention of 1949, as well as many principles of international law and international humanitarian law. It is the only Member State that rejected and completely violated 25 resolutions adopted by the Security Council with regard to the occupied Palestinian territories and scores of resolutions issued by the General Assembly and by other United Nations organs. This is precisely the pattern that would ensure and fuel armed conflict. What is required of the United Nations is precisely to put an end to this practice and pattern of behaviour and to do away with what I described earlier as the culture of impunity.

At this point, I would like to speak about the failure on the part of the Security Council to play any meaningful role over the past 10 months regarding the events unfolding in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, the attacks against the Palestinian people and the potential for a further deterioration of the situation. This undermines the credibility and stature of the Security Council and casts a shadow over its performance, due to the existence of double standards. The Security Council has been prevented from exercising its mandate under the Charter to address the question of the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, which undermines the credibility of the Security Council in preventing armed conflict and in reaching solutions to such conflicts.

We aspire to rectify this abnormal situation. However, if this does not occur, we look forward to the General Assembly's playing an alternative role with a view to preventing the deterioration of the situation and a drift towards a regional war, God forbid. I am not speaking in abstract terms. I am saying that the situation as we see it now could deteriorate into a regional war, and the Council is not doing anything about this fact. If the Council does not intervene, we will resort to the General Assembly in order to prevent that, and with a view to getting matters back on track towards building peace in that region of the Middle East.

The President: In accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 106th plenary meeting, on 12 July 2001, I now give the floor to the observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Helg (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. The outstanding report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict encourages us to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention, and to translate our promises into concrete actions. To be effective, the work of preventing armed conflicts must be the result of common efforts. I would like to stress here the importance of close cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, and also with civil society, including private sector enterprises, in the framework of the Global Compact initiative launched by the Secretary-General at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 1999.

This integrated and global concept of conflict prevention leads us today to the obligation incumbent upon all to try to reduce tensions, inequalities, offences against human dignity, racism and discrimination, injustice and the various forms of intolerance, all of which threaten peace and security. While this conceptual approach is shared by all of us, responsibility falls first and foremost to States themselves. Switzerland, one of whose foreign policy objectives is to work for the prevention of crises and armed conflicts, will continue to assume its responsibility. Here are some the means we are utilizing towards that end.

Switzerland was one of the very first countries to support and finance the Trust Fund for Preventive Action, an instrument that makes it possible for the Secretary-General to take urgent action with the freedom required by circumstances.

Moreover, Switzerland systematically takes into account the question of the prevention of crises and armed conflict in all its programmes of humanitarian and development cooperation, be it at the level of planning, implementation or follow-up. From this perspective, it has recently decided to increase the overall amount of the funds made available.

As regards human security, Switzerland is today highly committed to the struggle against the proliferation of light weapons and anti-personnel mines, two fields in which it is acting both conceptually and in the field. Our Government also pursues an active policy to advance respect for and promotion of human rights and seeks in this way to contribute also to the prevention of armed conflicts and crises. It uses many complementary instruments, such as diplomatic measures, critical dialogue, programmes in the economic and cooperation fields, legal and political training or even monitoring elections or situations in the field.

Switzerland also contributes to the promotion of the state of law and democracy, in particular with regard to the constitutional field in particularly unstable countries, by cooperating in the establishment of mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts that combine traditional power structures with the requirements of a modern State.

On the other hand, it has also established a pool of experts — monitors of elections and human rights, policemen, administrators, customs officials and so on — one of whose mandates is to complement the international peacekeeping operations.

Lastly, the Swiss Government works for the dissemination of international humanitarian law and its implementation by focusing in particular on work relating to the International Criminal Court, which is acquiring a significantly preventive character. In promoting international humanitarian law, Switzerland addresses both State and non-State actors, seeking to prevent serious violations of human rights, and thereby reduce the degree of violence in armed conflicts. Another objective of such efforts is to contain the forced displacement of populations within States as well as migratory movements, which are resulting more and more from armed conflicts.

I shall conclude by pointing out that this important report of the Secretary-General and this debate in the General Assembly provide us with an opportunity to strengthen our shared political will to prevent armed conflicts. We welcome this, and we call upon the community of States to translate this political will into deeds and acts.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to make statements in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right to reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Diab (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I requested the floor in order to comment on the accusations made by the representative of Israel. The representative of Israel forgets, or deliberately disregards, the conditions set by successive Israel Governments over 22 years for implementing resolution 425 (1978) since Israel occupied Lebanese territory in 1978. He forgets that the only force that compelled Israel to withdraw from Lebanon was the will of the Lebanese people, which was embodied in the valiant Lebanese resistance movement.

The Secretary-General stressed in paragraph 7 of his report on prevention of armed conflict, document S/2001/574, that "For early prevention to be effective, the multidimensional root causes of conflict need to be identified and addressed". No one can deny that the root causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict go back to the occupation by Israel of Arab territories, and a radical solution was defined by the Security Council when it called upon Israel to withdraw from these occupied Arab territories and to return them to their rightful owners under Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In his last report to the Security Council on the status of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the Secretary-General said,

> "In my last report, I noted that UNIFIL had essentially completed two of the three parts of its mandate, focusing now on the remaining task of restoring international peace and security. Pending a comprehensive peace, UNIFIL seeks to maintain the ceasefire". *(S/2001/423, para. 6)*

The Israeli occupation endangers peace and security in the region. That occupation prevents the conclusion and achievement of a comprehensive peace in the region. The demand by the Arab peoples and Governments for Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab territories is the expression of a legitimate right established in international law and United Nations resolutions.

The drastic solution mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report would be in the implementation by Israel of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). That implementation would ensure peace and security in the region.

I wish to remind the Israeli representative of the daily Israeli violations against Israeli violations against Lebanese territory, which are mentioned by the Secretary-General in paragraph 3 of his report (S/2001/423) to the Security Council that I cited earlier: "There were ... almost daily violations of the [Blue] line by Israeli aircraft which penetrated deeply into Lebanese airspace."

Furthermore, the Secretary-General mentions the landmines deployed by Israel inside Lebanese territory from which Israel withdrew. To this day, Israel refuses to hand over to the United Nations the maps that give the locations of those mines. Thus, nearly 100 Lebanese civilians died or were injured or permanently disabled in the wake of the Israeli withdrawal last year.

Also, the same report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council states that the landmines are still in southern Lebanon. Paragraph 9 states, "mines will remain a serious hazard" for UNIFIL in southern Lebanon.

We wonder, is this position in keeping with the culture of peace aimed at putting an end to the armed conflict that the Israeli representative alleges that his Government is seeking?

Finally the representative of Israel referred to the relationship between Lebanon and Syria. I wish to remind him that this constitutes an interference in domestic Lebanese and Syrian affairs, and the Israeli representative has no right to raise such matters.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: My delegation would like to exercise its right to reply to the statement made by the representative of Israel.

All the words used by the representative of Israel regarding the role of the United Nations in the prevention of armed conflict, regarding my country, Syria, and regarding the situation in Lebanon were ridiculous. The Israeli representative's intervention before this Assembly was yet another Israeli attempt to

distort facts and create falsehoods. It is clear that the thrust of the Israeli statement was not to help the United Nations efforts to prevent armed conflict; rather, it was a desperate attempt to justify the policies of aggression, killing and genocide practised by Israel.

The Israeli occupation forces just launched a treacherous, unjust aggression against territories under the control of the Palestinian Authority. As I speak, billows of smoke continue to rise out of homes that were demolished without any justification. The destruction of entire Palestinian neighbourhoods a few days ago, condemned by the whole world, falls within the framework of the prevention of armed conflict, contrary to what the representative of Israel claims.

In point of fact, the international community knows that the behaviour of Syria is in accordance with the laws of international behaviour and the resolutions of the United Nations. Syria is scrupulously respecting those resolutions. On the other hand, Syria, in response to Israeli attacks against its forces in Lebanon, has sought to prevent any armed conflict there.

The representative of Lebanon already addressed the Israeli falsehood regarding the role of Syria in Lebanon. However, I would like to make it clear that Syria continues to lend support to its brethren in Lebanon in order to extinguish the fires of civil war, the flames of which Israel did much to fan.

The presence of Syrian forces in Lebanon is legitimate. These forces are there on an ad hoc basis, and the leaders of the two countries continue to consult and coordinate in this regard. It is common knowledge that the United Nations, through its resolutions, has stated that Israel is the occupying Power; it is the only Power in the world that currently practises settlement.

Hezbollah, Party of God, is a Lebanese party that plays its legitimate role in Lebanon and does not receive instructions from any quarter or party — including from Syria. Israel, on the other hand, occupied Lebanon for 22 years, as was noted by the representative of Lebanon.

As regards the peace process, it is common knowledge that Syria was the country that opened the door to that process. Israeli Prime Minister Sharon — almost daily, in public, in broad daylight — declares that he will not return to the peace process. Two days ago he stood in an Israeli settlement in the occupied Golan Heights to declare that the greatest achievement in the history of Israel was the settlements, which he said must be expanded and new ones added. He also said that Israel will never withdraw from these territories.

So what peace is the representative of Israel talking about? What is this respect for resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) that he is talking about? It is clear that Israel uses two different lexicons, one to talk about terrorism, especially State-sponsored terrorism and acts of aggression in the region, and the other to make false, misleading and hypocritical statements in international forums, as we have witnessed today.

Syria is a country that has rights. We have no preconditions regarding the peace process.

The representative of Israel is making hysterical efforts to raise doubts about the position of the Asian Group regarding its unanimous, strong endorsement and approval of the candidacy of Syria for non-permanent membership in the Security Council. That candidacy has drawn support from many countries from all regions. That is because those countries believe in the role Syria is playing and can play. We have full confidence that our brothers in the Asian Group will prove to Israel that it is trying in vain to sway them in any way.

Syria was a member of the Security Council in the late 1940s and in the early 1970s, and would like as always to affirm to all United Nations Members that it will continue to comply with international law and legitimately uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Syria will also continue to abide by these commitments during its forthcoming membership in the Security Council. Syria will work along with all other Security Council members, as well as with all the Members of the United Nations, to strengthen the role of the Security Council in promoting peace and security throughout the world.

Mr. Lancry (Israel) (*spoke in French*): Since the representatives of Lebanon and Syria have said that the Israeli occupation is the cause and the source of the Israeli-Arab conflict, I feel the need to remind them once again that this so-called occupation did not just fall out of the sky. It is the result of an attempt — made in 1967, by Syria among others — to eliminate the State of Israel.

In 1973, Syria made an abortive attempt to, to use its preferred term, "liberate the occupied Golan" and

simultaneously tried again to destroy Israel. Syria's occupation of Lebanon, at the very least, gives the lie to its claim that it is acting with respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. Syria should start by withdrawing from Lebanon, which would surely put it in a better position vis-à-vis the principles of international law that it improperly invokes. In that light, I wonder how the representative of Syria can dare to attempt to dupe the international community by swearing respect for international law and international norms.

In that context, we are very mindful of Lebanese voices that are unequivocally raised against Syria's occupation of that country. I wonder what the representative of Syria has to say to those Lebanese voices. We can only express our wish that Lebanon will recover its full sovereignty, which is a precondition for its internal and external development, and for enabling Lebanon to deploy its own forces along the Lebanese-Israeli border in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). It would also permit Lebanon to submit Hezbollah — a terrorist organization if ever there was one — to Lebanese law.

I would have nothing to say about the Lebanese-Syrian situation if it were not a matter of extreme gravity with respect to the stability and security of the entire region. And I regret that I must dismay the representative of Syria by pointing out the vital truth: no, Israel is not the only Member State to occupy territory. Through its "fraternal consultations" with the Lebanese, Syria is occupying Lebanon.

Israel has clearly shown its will to make territorial compromises: a complete territorial compromise was adopted with Egypt, and we reached a peace agreement with the Jordanians on that same basis.

At the last negotiations between Israel and Syria — which took place in the United States, at Shepherdstown, West Virginia, in January 2000 — Israel, through then Prime Minister Ehud Barak, offered Syria, represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Farouk Al-Shara', a settlement which fully respected Syrian territorial integrity. Syria declined in the name of its national honour — which is nothing other than a somewhat cavalier violation of the integrity of the international border between Israel and Syria, and which thus ignores international law.

Let me also say a word about the concept of peace as understood by Mr. Farouk Al-Shara'; my comments moreover relate to the report of the Secretary-General. Mr. Farouk Al-Shara' spoke of his concept of peace at a meeting of a prestigious group of Arab writers, held in Damascus in February 2000 — and the extent to which Arab writers can be opinion-makers lends importance to my comment. He said that peace with Israel was nothing more than the transition from a military conflict to an economic, diplomatic, political and cultural conflict. According to Syria, then, peace is a transition from one conflict to another conflict. That is a very simplistic concept of peace that is at total variance with the spirit and the letter of the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict, which, as eloquently stated by the Secretary-General, rests also on economic, social and cultural integration.

With respect to the Security Council and to Syria's candidature for membership of that body, it is certainly good to have the geographical endorsement of the Asian Group. Article 23 of the Charter makes specific reference to the need to ensure geographical equity, and we have nothing to say about that: we have full respect for the choices and the prerogatives of the Asian group. That is undoubtedly a necessary condition, but it is insufficient by far. Article 23 states that due regard should be specially paid to the contribution of a candidate for membership of the Security Council to international stability and security. Today, Syria —

The President: I am obliged to interrupt the speaker, who has exceeded the time limit.

Mr. Lancry (Israel): I would beg the President to grant me a further 30 seconds.

The President: I would ask the representative of Israel kindly to conclude his statement.

Mr. Lancry (Israel): I shall do so, Sir.

(spoke in French)

Syria is today preventing Lebanon from deploying its forces in southern Lebanon. It thus inspires and encourages Hezbollah and disrupts regional peace and stability, while claiming that it is acting in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. I think that is the most ridiculous statement that anyone could make in this Assembly.

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Diab (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): The remarks made by the representative of Israel are indeed ridiculous. We cannot understand his aim in casting doubt on the independence and sovereignty of Lebanon. It seems he is forgetting that the alliance between Syria and Lebanon brought defeat to Israel's occupation of Lebanon and forced it to withdraw from occupied Lebanese territory. We in Lebanon therefore know who is our ally and who is our enemy.

The comments made by the Israeli representative with regard to terrorism and occupation are ludicrous and laughable. It seems that he believes that the world is blind to the crimes perpetrated by successive Israeli Governments.

Lebanon has not forgotten the massacre committed by occupying Israeli forces at Qana against Lebanese civilians, including children. That act was perpetrated against the symbol of international legitimacy, the United Nations compound, in violation of international law. The Secretary-General's reports on the subject clearly point out the facts, and I therefore need not speak at length on the matter. The representative of Israel could refer to those records for a first-hand understanding of the nature of the terrorism and occupation practised by his country.

We need not accuse the Government of Israel from this forum, as the Israeli authorities are fully aware of their policy of terrorism. Suffice it to repeat what Israeli opposition parliamentary leader Yossi Sarid said yesterday in the Knesset:

> "The Government of Israel daily violates the Mitchell report and other accords that have been signed, and demolishes the homes of scores of Palestinians, rendering them homeless and leaving women and children without any shelter".

The opposition leader Sarid also asks why Israelis do not ask themselves about the events in Hebron, in which settlers attacked Palestinian civilians but no one was indicted. He also said,

> "the demolition of Palestinian homes is a form of terrorism, but our selfishness does not allow us to say so explicitly".

The comments of a high-ranking Israeli official accusing his Government of terrorism are sufficient to explain the nature of Israel's Government, which shamelessly hides behind falsehoods and propagates them in this Assembly.

Mr. Mekdad (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for taking the floor once again, but the falsehoods that the Israeli representative is trying to spread deserve a reply of several minutes from us. It is clear that the Israeli representative is trying to lie. Moreover, he appears to believe the falsehoods he is propagating.

The representative of Lebanon once again responded to Israel's remarks about the brotherly relations between Syria and Lebanon. Syria desires to ensure the independence and sovereignty of Lebanon as it does its own. The Israeli representative has no right to speak about Syria the way he does. We challenge him to find any other State in the world that speaks about Syria in that way.

The question of Lebanon has been before the Security Council since 1975. We also challenge him to find any other country besides Israel that challenges the way Syria provides assistance to its brothers in Lebanon. It is Israel that practices terrorism, occupation and massacres in southern Lebanon. As I said in my first intervention in right of reply, Syria's presence in Lebanon is a form of assistance from one brother to another. It is also a provisional assistance that has imposed a heavy burden on Syrian resources. We look forward to the day when brotherly Lebanon will be able to completely overcome its difficulties. However, Syria will continue to stand by Lebanon until it does so.

The representative of Israel also spoke about the peace process. He knows that the Israeli leadership has demonstrated that it is not serious about the peace process. On the opening day of the Madrid Peace Conference, the then-Israeli Prime Minister stressed that he would extend those negotiations for decades in order that no meaningful result would be achieved.

But the great lie told by the representative of Israel's occupying authorities is that Syria launched war against Israel in 1967. United Nations documents, world leaders and the international community all know very well that at that time Israel had attacked Arab countries. It has continued to occupy territories

since that time, illustrating the nature of its occupation. Israel is interested only in land, not in peace.

What does the building of settlements in occupied territory in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights mean? What does it mean when the Prime Minister of Israel declares that he will not withdraw from those territories? He is now even trying to take back land that is under the control of the Palestinian National Authority. Israel has declared war on peace. Every day it causes destruction. We do not seek territory from Israel. We are claiming our land was occupied on 4 June 1967 and afterwards.

The President: I must interrupt the speaker to inform him that the five-minute period is up. I therefore ask him to be kind enough to conclude his statement.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: During the Shepherdstown talks, Israel did not offer what was required of it within the framework of the peace process, and it has not withdrawn from all occupied Syrian territory. That is why the peace talks failed and collapsed. All the comments by the Israeli representative about some interviews given by the Syrian Foreign Minister are untrue, inaccurate or distorted. Given the lack of time, I will not speak in detail about this last point.

Mr. David (Israel): I listened with interest to the statements of the representatives of Lebanon and of Syria. I was pleased that the representative of Lebanon quoted one of the leaders of the Israeli opposition; I look forward to the day when I will be able to hear, and also quote, representatives of the opposition in those two countries.

As far as the words of the Syrian representative are concerned, I would like to draw attention to the fact that there is a reason why his country has served as a headquarters for international terrorist organizations: his own country is a police State, a totalitarian dictatorship, an occupier and a cultivator and trafficker of narcotics. Syria is a nation in which the whole notion of human rights is but a cruel joke to which mere lip service is paid.

With regard to the reference about the negotiations in Shepherdstown, I would like to make it clear that, in an attempt to put an end to the Israeli-Syrian conflict during those negotiations, Israel proposed to Syria a far-reaching compromise which actually was, in the main, a concession to Syrian demands. Yet at the moment of truth, not only did Syria turn down Israel's gesture, but it also demanded, in return for a peace agreement, territories that it occupied from Israel proper in 1949 and which, under international law, belong to Israel and not to that country. That was one of the reasons why the talks did not succeed.

The President: The Assembly has concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 10.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.